



United States Mint Unveils Alabama Quarter

March 24, 2003

Alabama Honors Helen Keller and Her 'Spirit of Courage'

Tuscumbia, Alabama — United States Mint Director Henrietta Holsman Fore joined Governor Bob Riley today at “Ivy Green,” Helen Keller’s birthplace, to unveil the Alabama State commemorative quarter-dollar coin, the 22nd in the United States Mint’s 50 State Quarters Program. Several noted Alabamians also gave remarks, including State Senator Bobby Denton; Bill Johnson, the great-nephew of Helen Keller; Scott McCall, Vice President, National Programs Group, American Foundation for the Blind, former United States Senator Howell Heflin; and Heather Whitestone McCallum, Miss America 1995 from Alabama. The U.S. Army National Guard Band from Montgomery provided music for the event.

“This new quarter honors a citizen of Alabama whose exceptional courage and commitment to education provide enduring inspiration to the world,” said Director Fore. “The design also reminds us of the extraordinary natural beauty of Alabama, celebrating the long-leaf pine and magnolia, two natural wonders of this great State.”

The Alabama quarter is the second to be released in 2003. Alabama became the 22nd state to be admitted into the Union on December 14, 1819. The Alabama quarter design features an image of Helen Keller with her name in English, and in a reduced-size version of braille. The Alabama quarter is the first U.S. circulating coin to feature braille. An Alabama long leaf pine branch and magnolias grace the sides of the design, and a “Spirit of Courage” banner underlines the central image.

Miss Keller was born at “Ivy Green” in Tuscumbia, Alabama, in 1880. When she was a small child, an illness destroyed her sight and hearing and, consequently, deprived her of the senses used in the development of speech. Despite her disabilities, she learned to speak and read using the raised and manual alphabets, as well as braille. Miss Keller also graduated with honors, receiving her Bachelor of Arts degree from Radcliffe. She went on to publish numerous books, articles and essays. Miss Keller lived out her life addressing social issues for disabled persons and women. Every year at “Ivy Green,” a weeklong celebration is held to commemorate her lifetime of accomplishments and her “Spirit of Courage.”

In January 2001, former Governor Don Siegelman announced a statewide competition for Alabama schools to submit concepts for the Alabama quarter. Of the thousands of concepts submitted, Governor Siegelman forwarded three to the United States Mint: Helen Keller, Alabama’s role in social movements, and Alabama’s social and economic history. The United States Mint returned five candidate designs to the Governor’s office where the final selection of “Spirit of Courage,” featuring Helen Keller, was made.

The United States Mint officially released the Alabama quarter to the Federal Reserve Bank on March 17, 2003.

The United States Mint’s collectible five-coin proof sets featuring all five state quarters for 2003 also go on sale today. These and other popular 50 State Quarters products are available on the website, **www.usmint.gov**, and by calling 1-800-USA-MINT.

Launched in 1999, the United States Mint’s 50 State Quarters Program is a 10-year initiative that honors each of the states in the order that they were admitted into the Union. Each quarter is produced for about 10 weeks and will never be produced again. Surveys show that over 130 million adults are collecting the quarters, of which five are released in any given year.

Created by Congress in 1792, the United States Mint is the manufacturer of legal tender coinage for the United States. In Fiscal Year 2002, the United States Mint manufactured approximately 15 billion coins and generated revenue of \$1.8 billion. With facilities in five states and the District of Columbia, the United States Mint has customers in 54 countries and is the world’s 30th largest e-retailer.

For more information, please visit www.usmint.gov.

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